

A ROBERT MORTON PLAYS AGAIN

Editor's Note: We are indebted to Mr. William J. Sangeleer for information on a theatre and its pipe organ; the Loew's State Theatre in Providence, R. I., and its 4/20 Robert Morton.



The theatre was a deluxe 3800-seat house which boasted the finest of everything to please the moviegoer of the day. At 10 A.M. on Saturday, October 6, 1928, the theatre opened, showing the Metro Movietone picture *Excess Baggage* with Josephine Dunn and Ricardo Cortez, followed by several short feature, cartoons and newsreels. First-day attendance was 14,000 with the first ticket going to a 14-year-old boy, Robert E. Reilly. But the one item which really made the show a total success was the 4-manual, 20-rank Robert Morton organ. This instrument has had a very interesting history.

After the sound motion picture had limited the organ's use to presentations, it was used on a regular basis, nevertheless. However, the great hurricane of 1938 succeeded in filling the theatre, as well as most of the city of Providence, with four to twelve feet of seawater. This damaged the console and blower, but both were refurbished and returned to service later that year. However, the organ was used only occasionally.

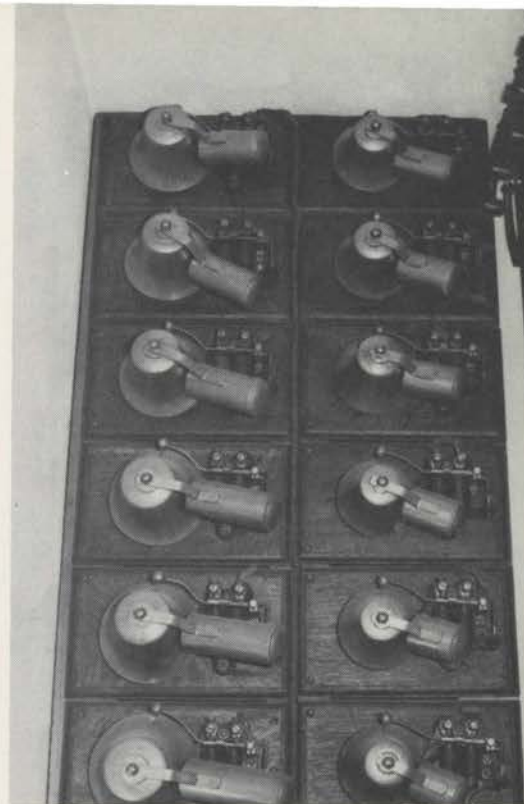
In 1955, another hurricane almost sealed the fate of this noble instrument. Because the electricity was knocked out, the console elevator remained in the down position as the entire orchestra pit filled with seawater, submerging it and the blowers again. This time, however, the theatre decided to leave the organ to its fate and made no effort to repair it. The years passed and finally on February 9, 1963, the organ was obtained by Mr. Pat Fucci of Waltham, Mass.

Mr. Fucci has faced many problems, both technical and otherwise. First, a key desk had to be located and after much searching, a 3-manual Wurlitzer burned out console shell was

obtained from a Philadelphia theatre. Sectioning and expanding followed in order to allow the console to accept the four new manuals and the original 216 Robert Morton stopkeys. Next came the rebuilding and releathering of pipe chests and reservoirs, some rewiring, a lot of cleaning, and some testing and repair. Replacing the original 25 HP, 5800 CFM blower is an arrangement using one 10 hp motor with blower and one 7½ hp motor with separate blower to assure the necessary wind pressures. At the present time, some of the percussions and the 16' extensions of three ranks must still be added before the organ is fully operational.

Also added to the original instrument is a piano which will be playable at the organ console. Another addition is a set of Moller electric Swiss bells. These were rescued from the organ of the University Theatre in Cambridge, Mass., before it was dismantled for parts. These bells are believed to be the only set known.

The nearly completed instrument reposes in the basement of Mr. Fucci's sprawling ranch house. All pipework is located to the rear of the console which is located in the center of the



Moller electric Swiss bells. Robert Morton chimes are on the extreme right.
(Sangeleer Photo)

basement. An area capable of seating 125 persons is to the front of the console. On occasion, people have been standing on the lawn, trying to see the organist while listening to the beautiful music which comes forth from the mighty Morton.

In Mr. Sangeleer's words, "Even in its unfinished condition, this organ is one of the finest examples of the theatre unit organ, built by the Robert Morton Company. It is also a tribute to the skill and ambition of the man who rescued and restored it, Mr. Pat Fucci." □

Mr. Pat Fucci at the console he built.

(Sangeleer Photo)

